

# Pride and Prejudice: The U. S. Immigration System

By ALPHONZO BELL, Congressman, 28th District  
When the McCarran-Walter Immigration and Nationality Act was passed over the veto of President Truman in 1952, a variety of laws governing the entry of foreigners into the United States was codified.

Restrictions on visa applicants, partially required by our special need for internal security during the hot war in Korea and the cold war against Stalinist Russia, were established.

Internal security legislation may be less important today but protective clauses probably will be retained in any revised bill the Senate and House might offer the nation this year. At issue is not the question of security.

WHAT IS AT stake is retention or gradual abandonment of a 40-year-old cornerstone of American immigration policy: the national origins quota system.

Our present immigration policy with its conspicuous north European bias flagrantly discriminates against southern and eastern Europe, Asia and Africa.

Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach recently testified that the immigration bill now before Congress would authorize only 7,700 quota admissions above the current annual limit of 158,000.

The actual effect would be to boost yearly quota-type immigration by perhaps 65,000 because permits not now claimed by countries with large quotas would be used on a "first come-first serve" basis by other nations, some of which did not exist in 1952 when our last major immigration law was written.

PRESIDENT Johnson in his message to Congress on immigration on Jan. 13, 1963, submitted proposals along the same broad line suggested by President Kennedy in July, 1963.

"Over the years the ancestors of all of us—some 42 million human beings—have migrated to these shores," President Johnson said. Then he added the consideration that is the heart of the matter on national immigration policy.

"The fundamental long-time American attitude has been to ask not where a person comes from but what are his personal qualities. On this basis men and women migrated from every quarter of the globe. By their hard work and their enormously varied

talents they hewed a great nation out of a wilderness."

IN HIS STATE of the Union speech on Jan. 4, 1963, the President briefly addressed himself to those in other lands seeking the promise of America through an immigration law based on the work a man can do and

not where he was born or how he spells his name.

Legislation emphasizing "personal quality," talent, and "the work a man can do," will not be easy to write and, if written, may be most difficult to explain satisfactorily to people inside and outside the United States. A law which privileged im-

migration status to persons with exceptional skills, training, or education, who would be especially advantageous to the United States, is likely to seem unduly harsh and undemocratic. It may be condemned as excessively conservative by orators who will not hesitate to quote from the Statue of Liberty.

But if we must be discriminatory, let us be so for better ethnic and regional preju-

dices our national origins quota system currently imposes on us and on the world.

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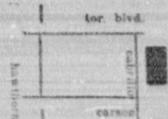
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